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Bulletin

Title: Local Travel Policy

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Financial Management Division, AFM/ARS

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This bulletin updates the Research, Education,
and Economics (REE) policy on local travel
reimbursement.

A. Authority

The authority for this Bulletin is Department Manual (DM) 2300-001, Agriculture Travel Regulation, Section 9., Policy and Procedures, j. Local Travel. DM 2300-001 states: “Travelers may be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred in the performance of official duties in and around their duty station. When the expense appears reasonable and necessary to conduct business, the traveler should be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses. Local travel expenses must be claimed within the fiscal year the expenses were incurred. However, a traveler may not be reimbursed for their normal commuting expenses, except under the Commuter Transit Subsidy Benefits Program.”

B. Local Travel Defined

DM 2300-001 defines local travel as “Any travel lasting less than twelve hours, within 35 miles of the duty station, or within 35 miles of the employee’s residence.”

C. REE Local Travel Policy

While employees are responsible for commuting expense to and from their residence and official duty station, it is REE policy that employees should not have to pay, out of pocket, over and above normal commuting expense when ordered to perform work away from official duty station but within local commuting area. Employees may be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred in performing official duties in and around their official duty station.

Local travel expenses may be incurred in a variety of work-related situations including, but not limited to, required attendance at meetings, conferences or other official functions, training, periodic work assignments at alternate duty locations in or around the official duty station, etc. The authority to reimburse employees for local travel expenses is delegated to each REE agency. Approval of individual local travel claims is generally the responsibility of the employee's fundholder, supervisor, or other designated travel approving official.

D. Allowable Local Travel Expenses

Local travel expenses may include such items:

- The cost of subway, bus, train, taxi, or other public transportation.
- When using a privately-owned vehicle (POV), cost calculated using the number of miles driven times the applicable mileage reimbursement rates as established in the Federal Travel Regulations (gasoline is included as a component of the mileage reimbursement rate and is not separately reimbursed).

- When authorized to use a Government-owned vehicle (GOV), reimbursable local travel expenses may include the cost of any necessary gasoline paid by the employee IF a fleet card is not available or accepted.
- Whether using a POV or GOV, the cost of parking and tolls are reimbursable.

Local travel expense does not include per diem. Per diem (both lodging and meals and incidental expense) is only authorized when travel is for more than 12 hours, and the travel is to locations outside the distance cited in Section B.

E. Determining Reimbursement for Local Travel Expenses.

Generally, if the expense appears reasonable and necessary to conduct business, the employee should be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses above and beyond the normal commuting costs. Reimbursement for local travel expenses incurred is at the discretion of the agency and the employee's supervisor or travel approving official.

It is important to note that, under a Comptroller General ruling, a **Federal Agency, cannot reimburse (or give the appearance that they are reimbursing) employees for local travel costs incurred solely from the employees residence to their official duty station** unless the employee is participating in the Public Transportation Benefit Program sponsored by the Federal Government. The authority under this program is unique and should not be interpreted as a basis for reimbursing employees for home to work travel costs.

There are many different commuting options for employees; for that reason, REE does not have a single, established formula for determining which local travel costs will or will not be paid. Employees must provide justification for expenses incurred over and above normal commuting expenses to receive reimbursement. Transit subsidy costs are included as a normal daily commuting cost of the employee when determining additional out of pocket expense.

The amount of reimbursement is determined on a case-by-case basis with consultation with the supervisor. The supervisor makes the final determination on local travel reimbursement consistent with the policy established in Section A of this Bulletin. The following are examples that are not intended to be inclusive of all situations, but will provide guidance on when to authorize local travel reimbursement:

Example A: An employee is in a van pool and pays a flat monthly rate of \$100 to maintain a slot in the van pool. The employee is ordered to work at an alternative office one day. He cannot take the van pool to the alternative location and must drive. Because the \$100 paid for the van pool is a flat monthly rate and not prorated daily or refundable for days the employee does not use the van pool, the cost of using a POV to perform work away from the official duty stations is over and above the cost of his normal commute. The employee should be reimbursed mileage, plus any tolls and/or parking incurred.

Example B: An employee uses her own car to drive to work each day, and parking is provided at her office at no cost. The employee is ordered to work at an alternative site for one day. The

employee drives 30 miles round-trip to her office, but it is a 40 mile round-trip from her residence to the alternative work site, and the employee must also pay a parking fee of \$10.00 at the alternative location. The employee should be reimbursed the additional 10 miles of mileage and the parking fee, because the mileage and parking are over and above the normal commuting costs.

Example C: An employee takes public transportation to work each day at a cost of \$3.25 each way. The employee is ordered to work at an alternative location, accessible by public transportation, but at a cost of \$2.85 each way. The employee receives no reimbursement, because the cost of commuting to the alternative location is not an additional cost to the employee.

Example D: An employee takes public transit to work each day, for which they receive a transit subsidy. The transit subsidy covers the \$4.50 cost of round-trip daily subway fare. In addition, the employee pays \$1.75 to park at the subway lot, and drives 10 miles round-trip to the subway lot, for an additional cost of \$5.50 (10 miles times .55 mileage reimbursement rate as of January 1, 2009). Total daily commuting cost is \$11.75. The employee is ordered to perform work at a location that is 20 miles (40 miles round-trip) from the employee's residence for a total cost of \$22.00 (40 miles times .55 mileage reimbursement rate). The employee's additional out of pocket expense is \$10.25 (\$22.00 minus normal cost of \$11.75), which may be reimbursed as local travel. Please note that the transit subsidy IS included as a normal commuting cost in this calculation.

F. Approving Local Travel Expenses.

Supervisors and other travel approving officials will ensure that employees are promptly reimbursed for reasonable, out-of-pocket expenses incurred for official local travel in or around the official duty station. **Approving reimbursement for local travel expenses incurred must be made on a case-by-case basis.** In making this determination, approving officials should take care not to reimburse or give the appearance that they are reimbursing employees for routine residence to official duty station commuting costs. It is the responsibility of the employee seeking reimbursement to clearly illustrate and justify that local travel costs incurred were out of pocket and not part of their normal commuting expense.

REE agencies in the Washington, DC, area provide regular shuttle service between various REE offices and the main Department of Agriculture (USDA) office on Independence Avenue, SW. Supervisors may elect to have employees assigned to alternative offices in the Washington, DC, area report to their official duty station and use shuttle service in lieu of authorizing and reimbursing local travel. When ordering employees to use shuttle service, supervisors should consider the time traveling on the shuttle as part of the employee's regular tour of duty hours.

G. Procedures for Reimbursing Local Travel

Local travel may be reimbursed using one of two methods:

- Through a Standard Form 1164, Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business, processed through the Foundation Financial Information System; or
- Through a local travel authorization using the National Finance Center's Unified Travel System, with a Type L, Local Travel Authorization Travel, Authorization/Advance (AD-202). A Type L travel authorization may be created for an individual or a group of employees. See Enclosure 1 for instructions on preparing Type L, Local Travel Authorization.

Any questions pertaining to this bulletin may be directed to Diane Eggert, Chief, Travel and Relocation Services Branch, on 301-504-1260.

/s/

S. M. HELMRICH

Director

Financial Management Division

Instructions for Form AD-202,
Travel Authorization for Type L, Local Travel

1. ACTION CODE (enter one of the following):
E = Enter to establish a new travel authorization.
A = Amends an authorization that was previously established.
2. AUTHORIZATION DATE: Enter the preparation date of the travel authorization.

SECTION A- IDENTIFICATION

3. TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION NO.: Enter the appropriate authorization number (13-position number) assigned to the authorization. The first position is the fiscal year (FY). The second position of the authorization must be "L" for local travel. If authorizing a single individual, the third position of the authorization number will be an "S". If authorizing a group of individuals, the third position of the authorization number will be an "M".
4. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.: Enter the traveler's social security number. If the authorization covers multiple travelers, leave this block blank and complete Form AD-202M (Attachment for Multiple Travelers). The AD-202M has a sufficient number of blocks to indicate the appropriate social security number of 50 individuals within an office.
5. NAME: Enter the traveler's name. If the authorization covers multiple travelers, leave this block blank and complete the AD-202M.

The AD-202M is used along with the AD-202 to accommodate situations of group travel of up to 50 travelers. Each AD-202M can accommodate 25 travelers, therefore, if 26-50 travelers are being authorized, use two AD-202M's.

6. AGENCY CODE: Enter the 2-digit agency code; "03" for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), "22" for the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, "18" for the Economic Research Service, and "20" for the National Agricultural Statistics Service.
7. AGENCY ORIGINATING OFFICE NUMBER (OON): Enter the applicable 10-digit originating office number, e.g., AG03XXXXXX.
8. TRAVELER ORIGINATING OFFICE NUMBER (OON): Leave blank.
9. ESTIMATED DATES OF TRAVEL: Enter the beginning and ending dates of the FY.

10. TRAVEL TYPE: Enter the type travel code "DM" for domestic travel.
11. GOVERNMENT CREDIT CARD HOLDER: Leave blank if this is a multiple authorization. If authorizing one individual, enter "Y" for yes if the traveler has a Government contractor-issued travel charge card or is eligible for a Government contractor-issued travel charge card. Enter "N" for no if the traveler is not eligible for a card.
12. TRAINING DOCUMENT NO.: Leave blank. However, if local travel is performed for the purpose of travel code 3, the training document number should be entered on the AD-616, Travel Voucher and the accounting redistributed to the correct purpose of travel code, accounting code, and percentage.
13. OFFICIAL DUTY STATION CITY AND STATE: For multiple Type L authorizations, leave this block blank. If authorizing one individual, enter the city or town and 2-position state abbreviation code in which the traveler is now stationed.
14. RESIDENT CITY AND STATE: For multiple Type L authorizations, leave this block blank. If authorizing one individual and this is the same as the official duty station, leave this block blank, otherwise, enter the city and 2-position state abbreviation code of the traveler's residence.

SECTION B- EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Only one block may be checked in this section. All employees on a multiple authorization must be of the same employment status.

15. PAYROLLED BY NFC: If all travelers are Federal employees of an agency payrolled by NFC, check this block and move to Section C. All employees listed as payrolled by the National Finance Center (NFC) must have been payrolled by NFC for at least 2 pay periods.
16. NOT PAYROLLED BY NFC: Leave blank.
17. NEW HIRE: If all travelers are newly-hired Federal employees whose effective date of employment has been within the last 2 pay periods, check this block and move to Section C. All employees listed on the authorization must meet the same criteria.
18. SPECIAL APPOINTEE: If all travelers are special appointees, check this block and move to Section C. All employees listed on the authorization must meet the same criteria.
19. NON-GOVERNMENT: Leave blank.

SECTION C- ITINERARY AND ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES

20. FROM: Leave blank.

21. TO: Leave blank.
22. PURPOSE OF TRAVEL: Enter a brief statement describing the specific reason for the travel. DO NOT use the purpose of travel code definition.
23. AUTHORIZED EXPENDITURES: The only expenditures that can be authorized for Type L authorizations are POV, Other, GSA Auto, and Car Rental. If a POV has been authorized, provide the POV rate.
24. TOTAL EST. EXPENDITURES AUTHORIZED: Enter the cumulative amount of Block 23.

SECTION D - ACCOUNTING CLASSIFICATION

25. DISTRIBUTE TOTAL ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES FROM SECTION C TO THE APPLICABLE PURPOSE OF TRAVEL CODE AND ACCOUNTING CLASSIFICATION

PURPOSE OF TRAVEL CODES: Enter the correct purpose travel code for each accounting code that will be entered. Only the following purpose codes should be used on a Type L.

1 - Site visit

2 - Information meeting

3 - Training Attendance

4 - Speech or presentation

5 - Conference attendance

15 - Informal Training

ACCOUNTING CLASSIFICATION: Enter the appropriate accounting code to which the travel will be charged. If there is more than one accounting code, then it should be annotated on the next line with the appropriate purpose of travel code and percentage.

SECTION E - TRAVEL ADVANCE

Leave this section blank.

SECTION F - AGENCY APPROVAL

35. APPROVING OFFICER'S NAME AND TITLE: Enter the name of the appropriate official and position title.

36. **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER:** Enter the approving officer's social security number.
Note: The social security number must be for the approving official that is signing the authorization.
37. **DATE APPROVED:** The approving officer must provide the date of approval, using the mm/dd/yy format.
38. **PHONE (AREA CODE & NO.):** Enter the area code and telephone number of the approving officer.
39. **APPROVING OFFICER'S SIGNATURE:** The approving officer must sign and the individual signing must be the same individual whose name and social security number appears in Blocks 35 and 36.
40. **CONTACT PERSON'S NAME:** Enter the name of the person to contact for information regarding the travel authorization if other than the approving official.
41. **PHONE (AREA CODE & NO.):** Enter the area code and telephone number of the contact person listed in Block 40.
42. **REMARKS:** Enter any additional information that may be pertinent.

SPECIAL NOTE: In instances where the employee's supervisor, normally considered the approving officer, is geographically separated from the employee, an alternate (local) approving officer may be designated. For example, ARS Area Directors will use the Area Administrative Officer (AAO) or Area Budget and Fiscal Officer (ABFO) as the approving officer for local travel reimbursement purposes. Use of the AAO/ABFO as approving officer does not apply to temporary duty travel situations.

Note: Follow NFC Manual Title II, Chapter 2, Section 1, Travel System and Title VI, Chapter 6, Section 1, Travel Online Data Entry, for additional instructions on processing Type L authorizations and reimbursement vouchers.